COMIC SHOP NEWS™
365
g.cody '94
John Byrne's Babe.™ & © 1994 John Byrne. All rights reserved.
BABE
Babe ™& ©1994 John Byrne, ARR.

A Prime Collection

Prime, Malibu's first Ultraverse title, is also one of the line's most successful books; early issues of the series have become very hard to find, with the second issue being particularly rare (and often quite pricey). Since Malibu doesn't want its readers to have to miss out on those early stories, they've assembled their first-ever reprint trade paperback, ***Prime Time***, that reprints the first four issues of the series and adds a special "Evolution of Prime" feature that includes interviews with Gerard Jones and Len Strazewski and original development sketches by Norm Breyfogle. Alex Ross, the acclaimed artist of ***Marvels,*** is supplying the new painted cover for the collection. ***Prime Time*** is scheduled for August release in trade paperback; Malibu is also producing a signed limited edition hardcover version of the book that will ship soon after the trade paperback.

Babe Ruthless?

Don't think of this Babe as a sensitive, demure woman who depends on others. Quite the contrary, Babe is an independent woman who chooses her own paths and who relies on no one... and in fact, has no qualms about dealing with those who stand in her way. Now, if she only knew who she was or just which way is "her way"...

Babe, a new John Byrne series debuting this summer, is a comic book enigma. The heroine is Babe, a stunningly beautiful woman who knows nothing more about her origins than does the rest of the world. She simply appeared on the beach in Southern California one day like Botticelli's Venus, lovely in form and face, sans clothing, dressed only in an inscrutable smile. She has incredible strength, virtual invulnerability, and an amphibian-like ability to breathe underwater—but she has no idea why she has these powers!

Babe soon attracts a great deal of attention—including the interest of Ralph Rowan and Gideon Longshadow, two men who have very different plans for the superpowered woman. And they aren't the only ones who see vast opportunities inherent in this beautiful woman—and as you can expect, a lot of those opportunistic schemes are less than noble.

This new series, which follows on the heels of ***Danger Unlimited***, is set in the ***Danger Unlimited*** universe, although it doesn't actually tie in with events in that series. Currently, Byrne has put ***Danger Unlimited*** on hiatus to make room in his schedule for this new series; while it's possible that he may revive Danger Unlimited later on, he admits that it's not in the plans right now because of weaker-than-anticipated sales on the ***Danger Unlimited*** miniseries.

Babe #1, a $2.50 comic written and illustrated by John Byrne with an assist from Matt Webb, is scheduled for July 28th release.

by ALEX KIRKLAND

Send In the Clones

Peter Parker's life has been anything but easy in the past few months: his parents returned, but proved not to be his parents at all—and subsequently died at the hands of one of Spider-Man's enemies; his aunt suffered a debilitating stroke; and his homelife has undergone severe stresses. But as bad as all of that is, it's going to get worse in the near future when a very familiar figure from Peter Parker's past returns... namely, Peter Parker!

"Power and Responsibility," a month-long crossover series running through all four new Spider-Man titles in the month of August, reintroduces the clone who last appeared approximately twenty years ago in ***Amazing Spider-Man #149.*** But is there room for two Peter Parkers... and two Spider-Mans? And is it possible that the clone has a plan to try to replace Peter Parker?

For many years, Spider-Man (and his many fans) have mistakenly assumed that there was no true Spider-Man clone; instead, evidence indicated that he was an innocent dupe who merely thought he was a clone. It turns out, though, that there really was a Spider-Man clone, and he didn't die many years ago as Peter Parker had thought.

The clone isn't a new figure in current Spider-Man storylines; fans met him months ago, when he began watching Aunt May. Once he reveals his true identity, Peter Parker becomes understandably suspicious (after all, he recently lost two people he thought were his parents) and confronts the clone. The confrontation soon becomes a union, though, when a new villain, Judas Traveller, takes over the Ravencroft Institute, the home for many of the Marvel Universe's most psychotic super-villains. His plan isn't to release the villains, though; instead, he threatens to kill them unless Spider-Man agrees to face him in combat.

Just how dangerous is Judas Traveller? Sufficiently dangerous that even Carnage is reluctant to challenge him, that's how dangerous... and dangerous enough that it soon appears that, unless the clone helps, Spider-Man will face defeat at his hands. This raises one of the most complex of all moral dilemmas: will the clone choose to help Spider-Man, or will he stand back and watch him suffer defeat and death so that he can step in and take over his life?...

"Power and Responsibility" not only reintroduces the clone, it also paves the way for two exciting storylines that will culminate in ***Amazing Spider-Man #400*** in early 1995. After the conclusion of the four-part storyline, ***Amazing Spider-Man*** and ***Spectacular Spider-Man*** will chronicle Spider-Man's adventures, while ***Web of Spider-Man*** and ***Spider-Man*** will follow the clone's efforts to find a place for himself in the Marvel Universe. And believe us, there are some real surprises in store for Spider-Man fans before these storylines are over... surprises that may very well have a lasting impact on Spider-Man's future!

"Power and Responsibility" begins on August 4th in ***Web of Spider-Man #117***; it continues into ***Amazing Spider-Man #394*** (August 11th); ***Spider-Man #51*** (August 18th); and ***Spectacular Spider-Man #217*** (August 25th). All four issues will be released in standard and enhanced editions; the standard editions will feature the basic storyline and a standard cover, while the enhanced editions will not only include two foil-enhanced flip-covers and a special sixteen-page original installment of a four-part clone origin tale, featuring previously unrevealed details about the clone's beginnings and his life since his supposed demise many years ago. The 48-page enhanced editions are priced at $2.95, while the standard editions are priced at $1.50 ($1.95 for ***Spider-Man #51***).

At the same time this new story arc begins, ***Web of Spider-Man*** will welcome a new artist as Steven Butler takes over the penciling honors from Alex Saviuk, who will soon become the artist on a new comic book inspired by the upcoming ***Spider-Man Animated Series***; Butler joins writer Terry Kavanagh and inker Randy Emberlin. The creative teams for the other books are J.M. DeMatteis, Mark Bagley, and new inker Larry Mahlstedt on ***Amazing Spider-Man***; Howard Mackie, Tom Lyle, and Scott Hanna on ***Spider-Man;*** and Tom DeFalco and Sal Buscema on ***Spectacular Spider-Man***. Danny Fingeroth, the editor of the Spider-Man family of books, will oversee the development of the entire storyline.

by CLIFF BIGGERS

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COMIC SHOP NEWS™
6 • 22 • 94
From Your Friendly Neighborhood Comics Outlet
Printed on 100% Recycled Newsprint

A Statuesque Sandman

One of DC's first statues was the stunning ***Sandman,*** which has subsequently become a hard-to-find collectible demanding prices ranging from $500 to $1000 each. As the Sandman audience has continued to grow, many fans have wished for an affordable Sandman statue they could add to their collection—and DC has obviously listened to their requests, because they have a second Sandman statue scheduled to debut this fall, just in time for holiday season gift-giving.

The Arabian Nights Sandman Statue, a wonderful, evocative statue sculpted by *Randy Bowen* and based on *P. Craig Russell*'s designs and images featured in ***Sandman #50,*** depicts Morpheus in stylized Arabian robes; each fully assembled and painted statue is made of cold-cast porcelain and depicts the Sandman holding a sphere of genuine Austrian crystal. DC is scheduling the $135.00 statue for November 17th release, although they warn that the complexity of production could push the ship date back as late as December 15th. If you don't want to miss out on one of these lovely collectibles, be sure to talk to the friendly folks at your local comic shop ASAP — and tell 'em that ***CSN*** sent you!

For Brigade, The Future Will Be the Past Presently

Images of Tomorrow, the special subseries of Image titles that offer a glimpse into the future of four different Image books, has become more than a single-month event. In June, Extreme Studios will continue Images of Tomorrow with ***Brigade #26***, a story that picks up a year after the events of ***Brigade #25***. In this issue, the surviving members of Brigade regroup in the aftermath of their battle with Youngblood in ***Brigade #25*** This issue will begin a new direction for ***Brigade,*** offering fans an intriguing teaser of the direction in which the current-timeline series is heading.

What Comes After Death? A Trade Paperback!

If you missed out on any issue of the ***Lady Death*** series, then what we're about to tell you won't come as a surprise: the series is a sellout all over the nation. "The series caught everyone by surprise, including us," publisher, writer, and ***Lady Death*** creator *Brian Pulido* said. Since Chaos! Comics' policy is to do no second printing of books, the company is falling back on a tried-and-true method of meeting the demand for the origin tale: they're collecting the entire series in a trade paperback scheduled for mid-July release, complemented by a new *Steven Hughes* cover.

For the collector who prefers a mor lavish package, Chaos! is also offering a hardcover edition of the miniseries. ***Lady Death: The Hardcover*** will feature durable binding, foil stamping, a new dust jacket illustration by *Steven Hughes*, and a heaping helping of extras, including an in-depth interview with Pulido and Hughes concerning Lady Death and Evil Ernie, script pages, layouts, and never-before-seen artwork, including Hughes' first illustration of Lady Death. ***The Lady Death TPB*** is priced at $6.95; the deluxe limited edition hardcover sells for $24.95.

CSNsider

Now that Eclipse is pretty much out of the comics business, several companies are showing a great deal of interest in various books formerly published by Eclipse—and in particular ***Miracleman;*** no agreements have been reached yet, but it's quite likely that ***Miracleman*** *will* find a new publisher in the near future... Stabur/Caliber Comics is in negotiations with a fan-favorite creator to prepare a line of super-hero comics... ***Marvels II*** is most assuredly in the works with art by *Tristan Schane*, but *Kurt Busiek*, writer of the original ***Marvels*** series, has bowed out as writer of the new series (although he emphasizes that the parting was totally amicable); no word yet as to who the new writer will be, or what the plot and approach of the series will be... Bad news: after initially announcing that ***The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.*** would continue next season, Fox has changed its mind and cancelled the series—and as you might expect, this brings an end to plans to license the Western humor-adventure series for comics... As *CSNsider* has already reported, Axis Comics has closed up shop on most of its titles—but the company will publish ***Tribe #s 4-6*** and ***Shaman's Tears #s 3-4*** before the imprint comes to an end; negotiations are already underway to continue Tribe under a new publisher... The Beatles may be coming back to comics; a publisher with a growing rock-comics line is very intersted in producing a comic book history of the group (and/or comic books based on various songs) to be released in conjunction with the upcoming Beatles-produced video history of the group, ***The Long and Winding Road***... ***Cain,*** the popular Harris Comics title that went on hiatus after a couple of issues, will return later this year... Claypool's ***Elvira, Mistress of the Dark*** received some complimentary press in a recent issue of ***Soap Opera Update***, which did a story on a soap-opera storyline than ran in a recent issue... ***Ogre #4,*** the final issue of Black Diamond's miniseries, has been expanded to 40 pages without a price increase... Bad news for Power Rangers fans: Hamilton Comics has run into some licensing problems that have forced the company to indefinitely postpone its ***Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers #1***; CSN will let you know once it's added back to the schedule... Christopher O'Donnell, who received critical acclaim for his role in ***Scent of a Woman,*** has signed to play Robin in the third ***Batman*** film...

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Editorial Office:
2339 Milstead Circle
Marietta, GA 30066
fax (404) 973-6949
Business Office:
2625 Piedmont Road #56-113
Atlanta, GA 30324
(404) 724-9402
Editors
Cliff Biggers & Ward Batty
Publisher
Comic Shop News, Inc.
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Ostrander the Eternal Writer

John Ostrander, the popular writer who has worked for virtually every major company in the field, will take over as writer for Valiant's ***Eternal Warrior*** following the summer mega-event, **The Chaos Effect,** where he will join artists *Ted Halsted* and *Mike DeCarlo*. "Those who know my past work know I'm drawn to dark, moody characters prone to violence, but with a code of honor," Ostrander said. "Eternal Warrior, probably better than any other Valiant character, is the sort of character I'm known for doing well. I look forward not only to writing his adventures, but exploring his character and the themes of the book. It may not be a marriage made in heaven, but it might be a match made in Hell."

Ostrander's first storyline ties in with the new ***Geomancer*** title debuting from Valiant in July; the search is underway for Geoff the Geomancer, and the Eternal Warrior plays an important part in that search. Once the new Gemonacer is found, though, the Eternal Warrior finds himself out of a job! That means that he now has to find a new role for himself after a couple of millennia as the protector of the Geomancer. Will he be a hero? Most likely—but as Ostrander sees it, the Eternal Warrior has seen too many civilizations, and their laws, rise and fall to believe in the supremacy of any one society's law, so he's not above breaking the law if he feels that his actions are just. ***Eternal Warrior #27***, a $2.25 comic, is scheduled for late July release.

BLAZE #1
HIS LIFE WAS ONCE A CIRCUS. IT'S ABOUT TO BECOME A FREAK SHOW.
A NEW ONGOING SERIES BY LARRY HAMA, HENRY MARTINEZ, AND BUD LAROSA. THE FIRST ISSUE HAS A MULTI-LEVEL EMBOSSED, FOIL-STAMPED COVER.

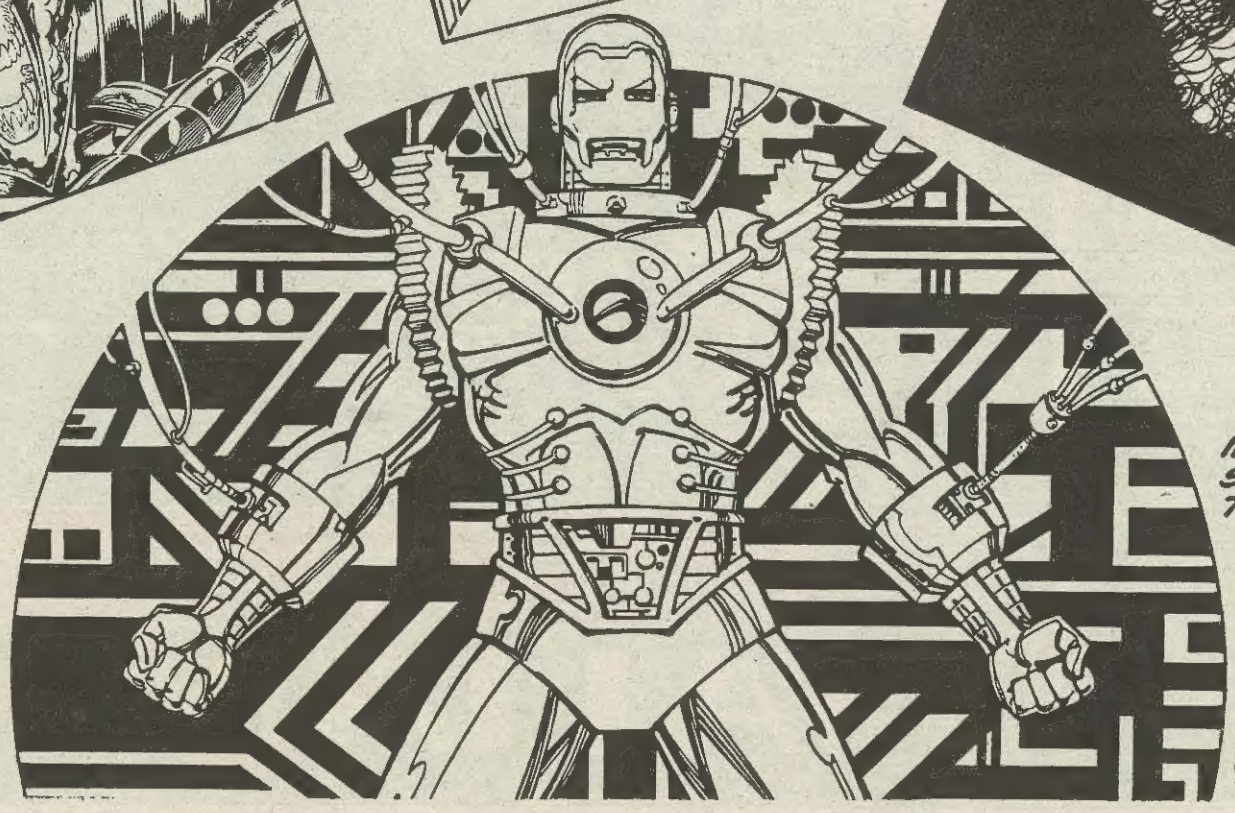
PUNISHER WAR ZONE ANNUAL #2
CAN LIVE AMMO KILL A DEAD ENEMY?
SALVATORE CARBONE RETURNS FOR POST-MORTEM MAYHEM IN A 64-PAGER BY CHUCK DIXON, RALPH MACCHIO, DALE EAGLESHAM, DAVE ROSS, AL WILLIAMSON, AND TIM DZON.

SPIDER-MAN: THE ARACHNIS PROJECT #1 OF 6
SPIDEY HEADS TO WASHINGTON FOR CAPITOL PUNISHMENT
SPIDER-MAN, STYX AND STONE, AND THE JURY ARE PULLED INTO THE MYSTERY OF THE ARACHNIS PROJECT!
BY MIKE LACKEY, ANDREW WILDMAN, AND STEPHEN BASKERVILLE.

VENOM: NIGHTS OF VENGEANCE #1 OF 4
ALIEN HUNTERS BRING VENOM AND VENGEANCE A WORLD OF HURT
MARVEL'S DEADLIEST SELF-PROCLAIMED HEROES TEAM UP IN THIS LIMITED SERIES BY HOWARD MACKIE, RON LIM, AND AL MILGROM. FOIL-STAMPED, NEON INK COVER.

SPIDER-MAN: WEB OF DOOM #1 OF 3
SPIDER-MAN MURDERS MAN IN WEB?!
WHEN A BURGLAR DIES WHILE TRAPPED IN SPIDER-MAN'S WEB, THE WALL-CRAWLER BECOMES PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE! BY JACK C. HARRIS, SCOTT KOLINS, AND SAM DELAROSA.

MIGHTY MARVEL FAN PHONE (516)352-1212
IT'S THE COST OF A REGULAR CALL FROM ANYWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES



IRON MAN 2020
STARK TERROR IN THE 21ST CENTURY
ARNO STARK, AKA IRON MAN 2020, GETS CAUGHT IN FUTURISTIC MANIPULATION AND INTRIGUE IN THIS 64-PAGE BOOKSHELF ONE-SHOT BY WALT SIMONSON, BOB WIACEK, AND WILL ROSADO.

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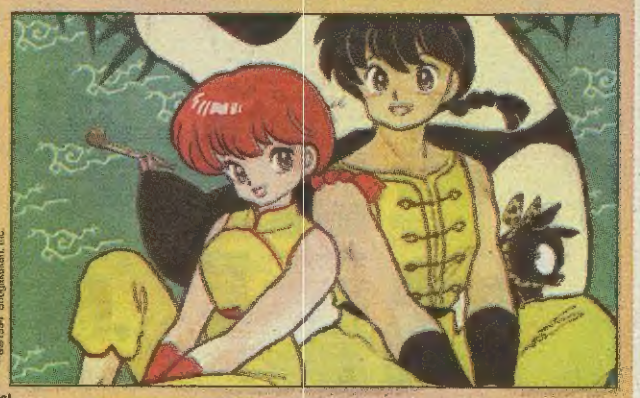
MARVEL COMICS

Takahashi Delivers the Old One-Two-Three



In the past couple of years, writer/artist *Rumiko Takahashi* has become the indisputable star of Viz Comics. ***Ranma 1/2, Lum: Urusei Yatsura, Maison Ikkoku, Mermaid's Scar, Rumic World***—her list of successful series grows with each passing month as Viz tries to satisfy the phenomenal demand for her mixture of fantasy, humor, and human interest. In July, Viz delivers an impressive combination of three different Takahashi works in three different formats, ensuring that her fans will have no shortage of summertime reading... and viewing!

Lum: Urusei Yatsura, her first American hit series, will return to the stands in ***Lum: Urusei Yatsura—The Perfect Collection***. This massive 400-page work collects the contents of the first two ***Lum*** graphic albums, which are completely sold out. ***Lum: Urusei Yatsura—The Perfect Collection***, a $19.95 book, is scheduled for July 21st release.

Maison Ikkoku, the story of young lovers and their offbeat neighbors who occupy a small apartment building, has proven to be quite a surprise hit in America. "***Maison Ikkoku*** has long been adored by fans all over the world," Viz editor *Trish Ledoux* said. "It's wonderful to see that English-speaking fans have also fallen in love with this Takahashi classic." Those fans will be pleased to hear that the story continues in ***Maison Ikkoku Part Three,*** a six-issue series that begins on July 5th; each 48-page issue carries a $2.95 pricetag.

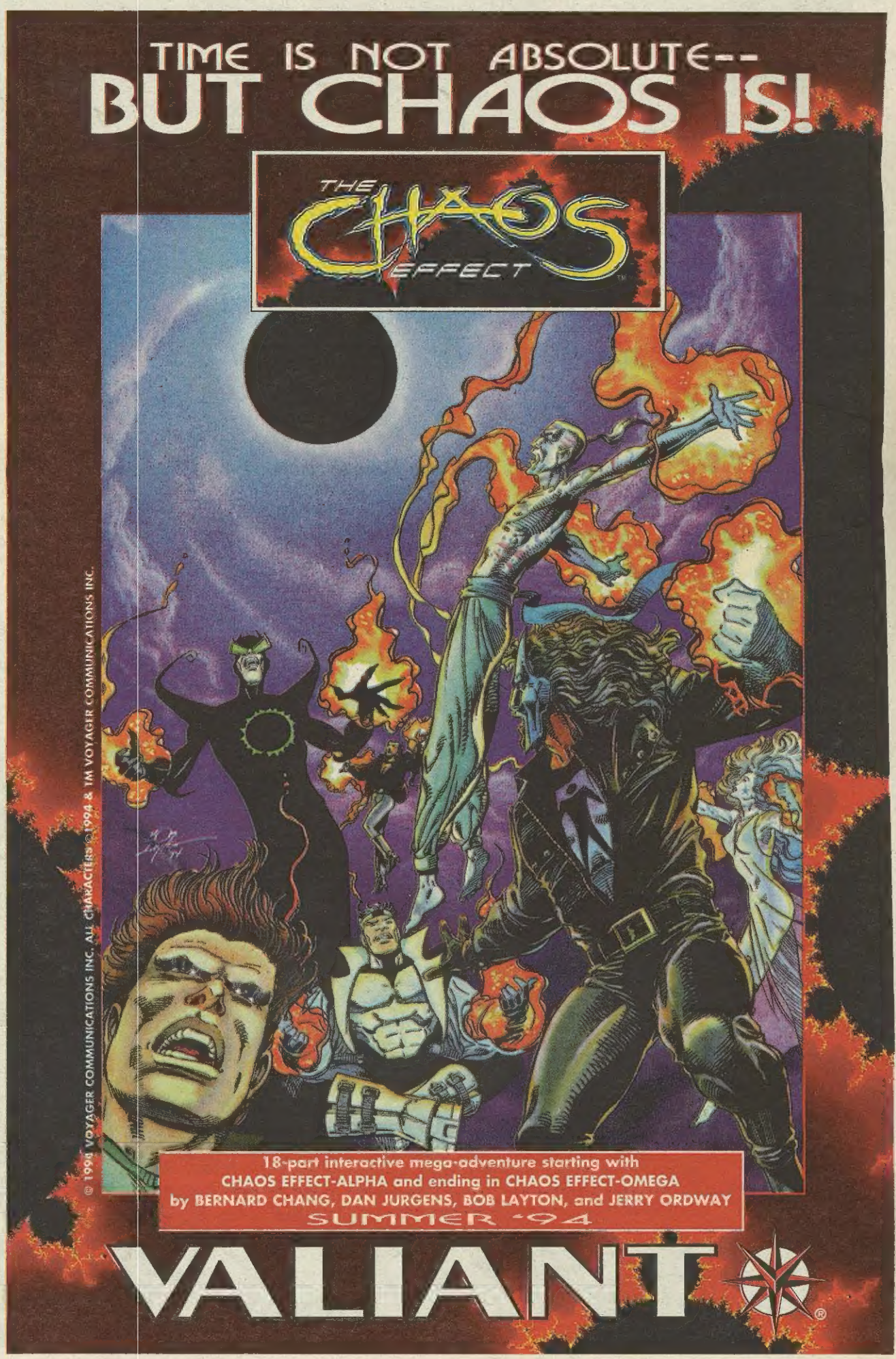
And what of ***Ranma 1/2***? Well, Viz Video is offering a new 90-minute tape, ***Ranma 1/2: The Collector's Edition—TV Volume 1*** on July 7th. This tape will feature three subtitled television episodes complete with liner notes, song translations, and historical background. The $39.95 deluxe tape will be packaged in a hard protective clamshell cover, and is projected as the first in a series of subtitled episodes.

These three projects join several continuing Rumiko Takahashi series in progress, such as ***Mermaid's Scar*** (the fourth issue, a $2.75 comic, is scheduled for July 7th release) and ***Ranma 1/2 Part Three*** (the eighth issue, a $2.75 comic, is scheduled for July 21st release. Furthermore, ***Animerica Volume 2 #7,*** a $4.95 magazine scheduled for July 7th release, will feature a detailed article about the two ***Ranma 1/2*** theatrical films and the return of ***Lum.*** *Whew!* Put it all together, and it looks like this is going to be quite an eventful summer for fans of the prolific manga creator!

The Mob Grows Bigger

When Lynch Mob follows Mother Mayhem and her villainous crew from their future world to our time, they have to deal with a plethora of supervillains in a world totally unfamiliar with super-powered beings. The first face-off occurs in ***Lynch Mob #2***—and what a face-off it is! This comic will introduce over fifty original super-powered characters in the Chaos! Universe, making it a must-have issue for years to come, as these characters appear in other titles.

"What makes these characters different is that they're not based on pre-existing characters," publisher/writer ***Brian Pulido*** said. "We're not doing our versions of Batman or Iceman. These characters are completely different from the superheroic and villainous characters in the marketplace now." You can meet them all in ***Lynch Mob #2,*** on sale in July, courtesy of Pulido and artists *Roman Morales III* and *Leonardo Jimenez*.


TIME IS NOT ABSOLUTE--
BUT CHAOS IS!
THE CHAOS EFFECT
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18-part interactive mega-adventure starting with
CHAOS EFFECT-ALPHA and ending in CHAOS EFFECT-OMEGA
by BERNARD CHANG, DAN JURGENS, BOB LAYTON, and JERRY ORDWAY
SUMMER '94
VALIANT

An Ongoing Dead Series? Of Corpse!

FantaCo's various ***Night of the Living Dead*** miniseries and one-shots have offered intriguing glimpses of the Dead world inspired by *George Romero*'s films, but this summer will make history as FantaCo launches their first ongoing Dead series. ***King of the Dead,*** written by *Steve Niles* and illustrated by *Brian Clarke*, follows "the biggest, baddest, meanest living/dead creature ever to walk the earth" as he attempts to uproot the human underground and make the world the territory of the Living Dead. Confident that England is conquered, King sets his sights on America, setting up an inevitable conflict between him and Cecil, the zombie bounty-hunter. To call attention to the fact that ***King of the Dead*** is an ongoing series and not just another one-shot, FantaCo is releasing the first two issues of the series in June, each priced at $1.95. No doubt about it—this is a serious undertaking!...

JUNE 23rd

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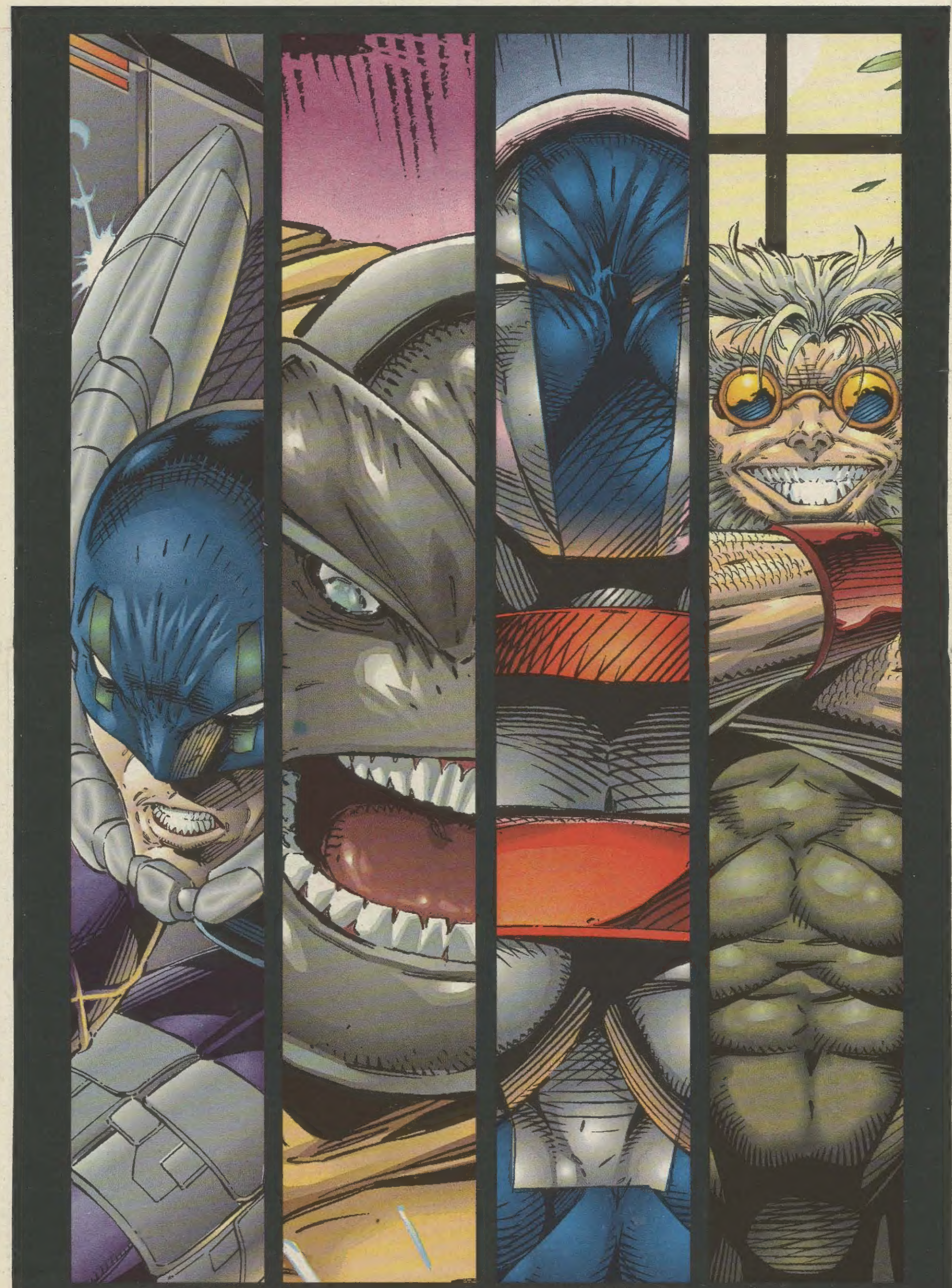


ROB LIEFELD

DANNY MIKI

KIKO TAGANASHI

THE BLOOD IS BACK!

BETTER THAN EVER!

YOUNGBLOOD™ #6

JUNE 23RD EVERYWHERE

EXTREME™ STUDIOS

image

Each month, Cliff Biggers (in plain type) and Brett Brooks (*in italic type*) take a look at a few choice comics scheduled for release in the next few weeks. Publishers interseted in having their books considered for review in this feature should send copies to *CSN Give & Take, 2339 Milstead Circle, Marietta GA 30066.* We'd prefer receiving copies of the books at least thirty days before they're scheduled to reach comic shops. Enough business—let's talk comics!

At the end of the reviews, we also offer readers a one to five rating scale for each book, with both Brett's and Cliff's ratings listed. Since we make a point to only devote space to books that we think deserve the attention, this will enable readers to get an idea just how much Brett and Cliff like each book. Here's the basic scale:

★	Pick it up only if you need something to read; it's worth the ticket price
★★	Entertaining, but at times predictable
★★★	Good stuff, worth a close look
★★★★	Primo reading; don't pass it up
★★★★★	You don't find comics better than this; *creme de la creme*

Concrete: Killer Smile #1
SERIOUS FIRE!
COULD IT BE RIOTS AGAIN?
™&©1994 Paul Chadwick
Radical Dreamer #1
THE HIGH-ED COMPANY GIVES YOU TWO *&!!@'N DAYS IF YOU BLOW THE DEADLINE AND MAKE IT BACK TO THE BEACH AFTER THAT--WE'LL BE LONG GONE!
BUT--WHAT IF--
SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG!
IMPOSSIBLE! I WOULD BE AWARE OF SUCH AN OCCURRENCE!
YOU HAVE FINALLY LOST YOUR SENSES!
IT SHOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE, BUT OUR VERY UNIVERSE... EVEN TIME ITSELF APPEARS TO BE UNRAVELING!
WE MUST ACT!
Zero Hour: A Crisis in Time #4

Concrete: Killer Smile proves that its not only quite possible, but sometimes even desirable to reduce the star of a series to supporting status. That's just what Paul Chadwick does in the first issue of this series; Larry Munro becomes the reluctant star of this comic when a simple act of kindness involves him in a robbery and possible murder—not as a criminal accomplice, mind you, but as a hostage... and possibly another victim.

Chadwick achieved a great deal of success with Concrete in its previous incarnations by making all the characters well-rounded, believable human beings. It didn't matter that Concrete was a half-ton-plus of living stone; he was a human being inside, all the more human because of the physical condition in which he found himself. Usually, though, Concrete was the nexus around which the action flowed; in the first issue of this series, he is little more than a guest-star. I'm certain that, by the time it's all over, Concrete will play a much more significant role in the series—but Chadwick's story is so compelling that no reader is going to feel cheated that Concrete doesn't have a bigger part to play in this first issue.

Most comics compress time—that is, they take events that cover a much larger time span and pack those events into a single issue or a story arc. In ***Concrete: Killer Smile***, Paul Chadwick is doing the opposite: he's expanding time, taking an event that occurs in a very limited span of time and stretching it out to fill a limited series. To do this, he has to take readers into Larry Munro's mind; readers have to perceive time from Munro's point of view as every moment seems slowed down and stretched out, as every slight action forces him to consider the fact that he might be living his last moment. Psychologically, ***Killer Smile*** is like a car wreck stretched out over four issues—time has been distorted by Munro's fear of death, and readers vicariously experience both the fear and the distortion.

I found that aspect of this story very compelling. Little insights into the thoughts of others have always made the ***Concrete*** *stories very personal, as opposed to the way that most thoughts in comics stories only seem to heighten the melodrama. In this case, it was nice to see the simple random thoughts, and the perpetual hindsight that all of us go through on a daily basis, brought into the comics world. Everything that happened seemed perfectly normal, except of the fact that something very abnormal for the average individual was occurring. Another testament to Chadwick's writing.*

Don't think that Concrete has no part in this story; it's obvious from Chadwick's set-up that Concrete is being drawn into Munro's plight, although he's not wholly aware just what is happening. Munro is the star of this issue, though; he's an everyman with whom every reader can sympathize.

Concrete: Killer Smile is a taut, suspenseful tale that's a departure from the typical **Concrete** story—but then again, Chadwick has told so many varied stories using Concrete as a focus that it might be unfair to say that there is such a thing as a typical Concrete story.

Concrete: Killer Smile #1
Cliff: ★★★★
Brett: ★★★★

There are so many people out there trying to create something new and different for the comics market that it's easy to overlook something that deserves your attention because it appears in some way to be trendy or gimmicky. One of the more pleasant aspects of this job is that every once in a while we get the chance to point out a book that you positively shouldn't pass up—like now.

Radical Dreamer *is the new series from Mark Wheatley and Blackball Comics that uses a fairly gimmicky design...*

A very, *very* gimmicky design..,

Better than that, though, the book uses some original ideas and artwork to tell a terrific story. ***Radical Dreamer*** *is the story of Max Wrighter, a peasant-cum-genius who has helped a futuristic society develop what might be their most powerful tool and weapon—The Dreamnet. The Dreamnet is an alien-inspired device that connects humans into a cyberspace world where their innermost dreams can become reality—oh, you can also get the news. Of course, no one wants the news when your every desire is at your fingertips. Tragedy strikes the Dreamnet when a psychopath gets access to it, and is able to break through the walls that separate everyone's consciousness and kill or drive insane over ten percent of the systems subscribers. Now everyone wants to know how to get into the system and travel to other people's dreams, to become what is being called a radical dreamer—and Max is the prime candidate.*

Mark Wheatley has created a very solid and believable world in ***Radical Dreamer****. The adventure that awaits the reader of this book lives in the minds of others, and in the reality that most creations can be subversely distorted to be used as weapons.* ***Radical Dreamer*** *is a very bold unique, and entertaining title, that creates not only a sense of wonder for the people involved in the series, but also for the reader. I found this one of the most entertaining and captivating books that I've encountered in quite some time.*

I agree that the story is bold and unique, but I'd prefer to see it in a more traditional format; the fold-out format is unwieldy and at times difficult to follow. Wheatley's fluid artwork helps; he creates a natural flow that offsets somewhat the problems inherent in the format.

The art style that Wheatley is using on the series is very reminiscent of the work he did on the ***Mars*** *title several years ago from First Comics. At that time it seemed to be a very unusual and distracting style of art to many readers, but it's been a decade, and now this art style should be much more palatable to the average comics reader. I liked the art on* ***Mars*** *when it first came out, and I like the art on* ***Radical Dreamer*** *even more.*

As you have already mentioned, the one thing about

this book that I feel might hurt it is the style in which it is presented. ***Radical Dreamer*** *is being released in what is being dubbed the Poster Format style of comics. SImply put, this is like reading a comic like a road map. You have to take the comic and fold it out page after page until you end up with one large poster sized page in your hand. The entire book is printed on one piece of paper, and folded over on top of itself to create something that begins as comic sized, but when you've finished reading the last page, the book is as big as a medium-sized poster. This can be confusing and cumbersome, but the book is still great.*

I also wish the poster format offered a little bit more story; the book is intriguing enough that I'd like a little larger portion in each issue.

Radical Dreamer *is the type of book that I wish were published more often. The story matter is intelligent and thought provoking, and the characters are believable and entertaining. This isn't going to be a book for everyone, but if you're looking for something different, then I can't recommend this title highly enough.*

Radical Dreamer #1
Cliff: ★★
Brett: ★★★★

If you can read through all of ***Zero Hour: Crisis In Time #4*** without getting hooked on Dan Jurgens' story, then I have serious doubts that you have any sense of wonder whatsoever.

As a member of the ***Superman*** creative team, Jurgens has helped to create some of the most consistently well-crafted stories in modern comics. Even the scope of the grand ***Superman*** sagas is somewhat constrained in comparison with the immensity of ***Zero Hour***, though. This is a story on a scale with ***Crisis On Infinite Earths***, with which I'm sure it's destined to be compared many times. Whereas ***Crisis*** pitted virtually every DC hero against a recognized menace, though, ***Zero Hour*** confronts DC's mightiest heroes with a series of enigmas, forcing them to save the DC Universe while discovering the true nature of the threat that endangers them all.

I've always preferred this sort of story: while the grand hero-versus-villain confrontation can be satisfying in an archetypal sort of way, I much prefer to see heroes face an mysterious challenge that they must overcome before they can determine the necessary course of action to defeat their enemy. I credit Gardner Fox with this; he managed to pull off this sort of story time and again in the glory days of the Silver Age ***Justice League of America***, which was one of my favorite comics.

Strangely, I felt that this story present in enigma very similar in style and tone to that featured in the earliest issues of ***Crisis on Infinite Earths****. The mystery— and the seeming demise of everything and everybody— seemed very much at hand in* ***Crisis****, and* ***Zero Hour*** *gives me much the same sensation. I don't think that it was an accident to have the Flash appear as he did in the first issue of* ***Zero Hour****; his appearance in the early issues of* ***Crisis*** *are one of the most memorable sequences of that series. Okay, I promise not to compare* ***Zero Hour*** *to* ***Crisis*** *anymore.*

It's a natural comparison—but I feel like the shorter five-issue span of ***Zero Hour*** is forcing Jurgens to offer much more story development in each issue than Wolfman and Perez did in the twelve-issue ***Crisis***.

As a company DC seems to have more luck with this sort of grand event than any other publisher; their superhero crossovers are Wagnerian, even Homeric, in scope and structure. At the same time, their characters are so familiar that their crossover events are usually more than just a meeting of supersuits.

It's the scope of the meetings of supersuits that make this an epic for the comic reader, though. If you just had superheroes meeting, the story would be fairly typical of what happened on a monthly basis. It's the manner that the characters are introduced, and the meaning behind their meetings that create the wonder. Having Batman meet Batgirl on the street, and a confusion arising about how she's walking around after the Joker paralyzed her, creates the mystery. The size of the characters creates the scope.

In these review columns, I've often mentioned my affinity for time stories; since time is of the essence of ***Zero Hour***, I'm predisposed to enjoy it. I think, though, that I would be intrigued by Jurgens' story even if I weren't such a sucker for time stories; it's a strong concept, well-plotted and well-paced, and it's tailor-made for a weekly miniseries approach.

I can't discuss ***Zero Hour*** without mentioning the artwork; Dan Jurgens pencils are complemented by Jerry Ordway's inks, and the result is a dynamic, visually exciting book that almost epitomizes the classic visual style. It's bold, forceful, and dynamic without resorting to the ubiquitous fine lines and crosshatchings that typify fan-favorite artwork nowadays.

Zero Hour proves that the epic crossover hasn't been destroyed through overuse. I haven't had a chance to read any of the crossover sagas from the various other companies who are constructing their own summertime events, but if they manage to come close to the level of quality and excitement of ***Zero Hour***, then superhero fans are in for a great

Aquaman #1

Victory #1

SINCE WHEN DOES AN IGNORANT HURLER SET POLICY FOR HIS BETTERS?
IF YOU CAN'T SMELL THE ROT COMING OFF THAT TUBER --
™&©1994 Jack Kirby

Star Slammers #1

Vamps #1

Grendel Tales: The Devil In Our Midst #1

summer. By the time it's all over, I suspect that ***Zero Hour*** is going to be regarded as the event of the summer of '94... if it isn't, then I'm really eager to see what can top it!

Zero Hour: A Crisis in Time #4
Cliff: ★★★★
Brett: ★★★★

*Something fishy is happening to **Aquaman**. Okay,that might have been an obvious joke, but it doesn't change the fact that th basic meaning of the statement is true. The king of the seas just isn't acting like the guy we've gotten used to hanging around. He seems moodier, more distracted—and he's got a beard and long hair...*

***Aquaman** is back in a new ongoing series that picks up where the mini-series of last year left off. Once again, the chronicles of the Sea King are being chronicled by Peter David, but he's brought on a new artist, fresh from a stint on the **Freex** title from Malibu's Ultraverse, Marty Egeland.*

David, as usual, does a great job in telling a story. If you didn't read the mini-series though, you might feel like you've missed a bit of something, because, as I've mentioned, Aquaman is a little more terse than previously portrayed. Aquaman is trying to find his place in the world, whether it be above the waves or below, and he really hasn't found anything to give him a direction. Perhaps a good slug-fest in the wreck of a sunken nuclear sub will help out? That might be a good idea, since it happens in eh first issue. Aquaman confronts Charybdis, an undersea demon with plans for Arthur. He also meets up with Dolphin, the water breathing mystery woman with a strange fashion sense.

Peter's had an affection for DC's underwater heroes ever since his work on Atlantis Chronicles; here he takes on the task of giving a personality to a hero who's been pretty flat ever since the end of the ***Aquaman*** series of the 1970's. It may not be the personality every reader had envisioned—in fact, it's a much darker, moodier personality than usually associated with Aquaman—but it's noteworthy because it is, after all, a personality. Aquaman has been, for the most part, a solemn cypher; he was a collection of clichés rather than a complex character.

*Even in this book's darker moments, Peter David is able to convey a sense of fun and adventure that have come to typify his stories. David is one of the best, and most consistent writers in the business today, and if the first issue is any indication than **Aquaman** is definitely steering in the right direction. If the first issue isn't an indication, than howabout the fact that Aquaman will be teaming up with Lobo in the near future? It seems natural enough to me: they both like dolphins.*

Yes, and this interpretation of Aquaman seems as prone to bouts of temper as Lobo...

The art team of Marty Egeland and Brad Vancata do a great job of visualizing this story. Egeland has a very clean, crisp style that carries a strong sense of style along with it. If anything, this is better than the work that he did on Freaks, and Vancata inks him very naturally. This is an art team that is sure to gather loads of fan attention.

*Aquaman has always been a character who seemed to be a little lost in the comics world. A genuine fish out of water. He didn't seem to serve much purpose on land, where his powers were weakest, and in the ocean it becomes very difficult to convey a world to which we air-breathers can relate. Peter David seems to think so, too, and this **Aquaman** is looking for a place in the world. With someone like David in control, I wouldn't be too surprised to see him finally find that place.*

Aquaman #1
Cliff: ★★★
Brett: ★★★

Keith Giffen is one of the most versatile artists working in comics today. In a decade and a half, his style has metamorphosed time and again, occasionally changing so radically that it's hard to believe that there is only one Keith Giffen. Through all his many transitions, though, I've always had an affinity for the Giffen style that first caught my eye, the style that was so evident in his first stint on ***Legion of Super-Heroes***. And I'm glad to see that Keith has returned to that style, at least for the moment, in Topps' ***Victory #1***.

Given Kurt Busiek's script for this limited series, it's no surprise that Giffen should turn to a bolder, more heroic style. ***Victory*** unites every hero in Topps' Kirbyverse; it's as packed as any Kirby tale from the 1960's or 1970's, although the style is reminiscent of the classic Fourth World work Kirby did for DC. Kurt Busiek recognizes that Kirby's heroes are more archetypes than personalities, so he plays to that strength; the result is a story brimming over with heroes and villains, a larger-than-life story that reflects Jack Kirby's talent for creating a mythology.

I think the archetypal character use will also make this book more accessible to the reader than if the book were heavily laden with character specifics. By being able to recognize the hero, the dark stranger, the mysterious loner, the overzealous insecure out-to-prove-himself rebel, etc., people are going to be able to identify with what happens much more quickly.

If artists were paid by the line, Keith Giffen would be rich just from his work on ***Victory #1***; he's never packed more into every single panel than he does here. His characters never get lost in the staggering detail of the story, though, because Giffen brings in a Kirbyesque sense of design that makes the figures thrust out of the background detail. I'd hate to limit an artist to doing the same thing over and over... but it wouldn't bother me a bit to see Giffen utilizing this style quite frequently.

You don't have to be familiar with all of the characters in the Topps Kirbyverse to enjoy ***Victory***; you just have to have an appreciation for Kirby's style of superheroes-as-mythology, and an appreciation for the grand struggles between good and evil that were inherent in almost everything Kirby created.

Victory #1
Cliff: ★★★
Brett: ★★

*The first time I encountered **The Star Slammers** was in the pages of the graphic novel from Marvel Comics.*

I predate you: I recall a few ***Star Slammers*** pages from an old Worldcon bid.

I still remember that opening sequence with the fortress awaiting the arrival of these dreaded mercenaries, all of their weapons and forces trained on anything that might come flying out of the sky or marching up towards them on land—and all that showed up were three people. Those three people then proceeded to take out the entire fortress and every soldier that came up against them. I was hooked at that point, and I kept waiting for a series to follow.

*I think I've waited long enough. **Star Slammers** is returning in a new mini-series from the Bravura imprint of Malibu Comics. Walt Simonson is still the man in charge, and he's brought his wife Louise along for the ride this time. The story of this new **Star Slammers** mini-series occurs several years after the events of the graphic novel. The Slammers still have the power of the silver-mind, and they are still fighting against the empire—but some things are different. The Slammers have gotten a little overconfident, and as a result the impossible happens—they lose and one of them is taken captive. His name is Rojas, and we get to find out exactly how he was captured, and exactly what the result of that capture will be. In the first issue, he's being taken back for trial and execution (a given outcome, already) by a general named Phaedra, who appears to be quite capable herself. Then, an assassin shows up and slaughters both Rojas guards, and seemingly kills Rojas himself—but there are still several issues left in the series, so don't panic.*

This is a bit different than the previous Simonson ***Star Slammers*** graphic novel; the scope is a little less grand, a little more character focused. It's a very solid series, but I think it's going to be a bit more entertaining for those who've read the previous graphic novel than it will be for newcomers. Of course, it's very possible that Simonson and Bravura are going to add a text page giving a little background on the Slammers for those who aren't familiar with the series already.

*The art is supplied by Simonson as well. Simonson is regarded as one of the great illustrators in the comics field. His work on **Thor** catapulted him from a big name to a giant, and since then he has gone on to have a series of success one after another. Every illustration seems to breathe power and dynamics. He is definitely a legend in the comics field.*

And boy, isn't this a *packed* book? No one can accuse Simonson of skimping on the details!...

***Star Slammers** is high adventure in a science-fiction setting. The action is intense and the story quickly paced to keep the reader moving through the tale at a breakneck pace. I felt a sense of wonder when I read the first graphic novel many years ago. Some of the wonder is gone, but the fun is still there.*

Star Slammers #1
Cliff: ★★
Brett: ★★

Vamps was touted by DC as "Thelma and Louise meets Vampire Lestat." That's a provocative high-concept description, but if you think that all Elaine Lee and Will Simpson are doing is crossing two successful concepts, then you are going to be very surprised when you read ***Vamps #1***.

Far too many vampire stories today feel that the only way they can interest readers in their vampire tales is to humanize the vampires, to make them truly sorry for their vampiric natures—in short, to make them human-wannabees. Elaine Lee absolutely refuses to do this, and in her refusal, she creates five sensual, free-spirited, empowered vampires who revel in their freedom from the control of a male vampire—and in their freedom to meet the world on their own terms.

Vamps is a tense, charged story about contemporary vampires; in many ways, it is not a vampire tale. "Vampire tale" conjures up images of gothic settings and moody prose and noir-styled settings and nihilistic, melancholy narrative with a strong streak of romanticism. Elaine Lee doesn't try to be another Bram Stoker or Chelsea Quinn Yarbro or Anne Rice or Nancy Collins or anyone else—instead, she tells a very distinctive stories about five women who are vampires.

I don't agree entirely with that phrase, though I do agree up to a point. Some of these characters don't mind being vampires, while it seems fairly clear that at least one of them, Howler, would very much like to be human again; to have a second chance in several ways.

Certainly she'd like to be human again, but she isn't wallowing in remorse or self-pity for what she is...

I agree that Lee doesn't dwell on that, that she concentrates more on the specific characters of the story, which is why this book works quite well. There is a definite feeling of loss in the book though, as though they weren't all happy about what they've become, but are trying to the best of it based on what they can.

What you see as a feeling of loss I see as a feeling of melancholy—a bittersweet feeling for what they were, perhaps, but not so strong that it negates their enthusiasm for what they are now.

They refuse to feel remorse for sustaining themselves on the lives of others because they can't control what they are, but there is a feeling that they might prefer being something else.

Fair enough...

Will Simpson isn't a fan-favorite artist; that's fine, because ***Vamps*** isn't the sort of book that needs a visual stylist of the sort that fans seem to prefer. Simpson's strengths are tailored perfectly for a series of this sort; he can illustrate people in normal clothes as capably as many artists depict them in spandex supersuits, and he can communicate emotion with great ease. His art has a vivid, contemporary edge that complements Elaine Lee's storytelling style; just like Lee, he refuses to fall back on the clichéd images of the typical vampire comic.

Vamps is a six-issue limited series; at this point, I have no idea where Lee and Simpson are taking us in these six issues, but I already know that I hope they leave open the possibility that these vamps can continue their night rides in future series. These vampires make many of their fellow comic-book bloodsuckers seem just a little bit anemic...

Vamps #1
Cliff: ★★★★
Brett: ★★★

***Grendel** has become a excellent series of mini-series based on the creation of Matt Wagner, and published by Dark Horse Comics. With very few exceptions, all of the **Grendel** stories are interesting looks at the nature of mankind, and the effects that outside forces can have on our lives. The latest in the ongoing series of mini-series under the **Grendel Tales** banner is **The Devil In Our Midst**, a five issue story by Steve Seagle and Paul Grist.*

It's amazing that Grendel has held together so well, since each miniseries has a different creative team; it's a credit to the strength of Matt Wagner's concept that all these writers can bring so many new facets to the Grendel story without contradicting the mood or tone that Wagner has created.

This story takes place in the Antarctic, at the sight of an international waste dump. The Grendel who arrives has little memory of how he got there, save that he made it to shore after being set adrift from a pirate ship. Once he arrives, the crew of the station—who have been cut off from the outside world by the company that sent them there—become infected with a disease that literally causes their bodies to explode. The only sign of this approaching is a strange blood pattern that arises to the face in the pattern of the Grendel mask. Is the Grendel responsible? Some think so, but no one can be sure.

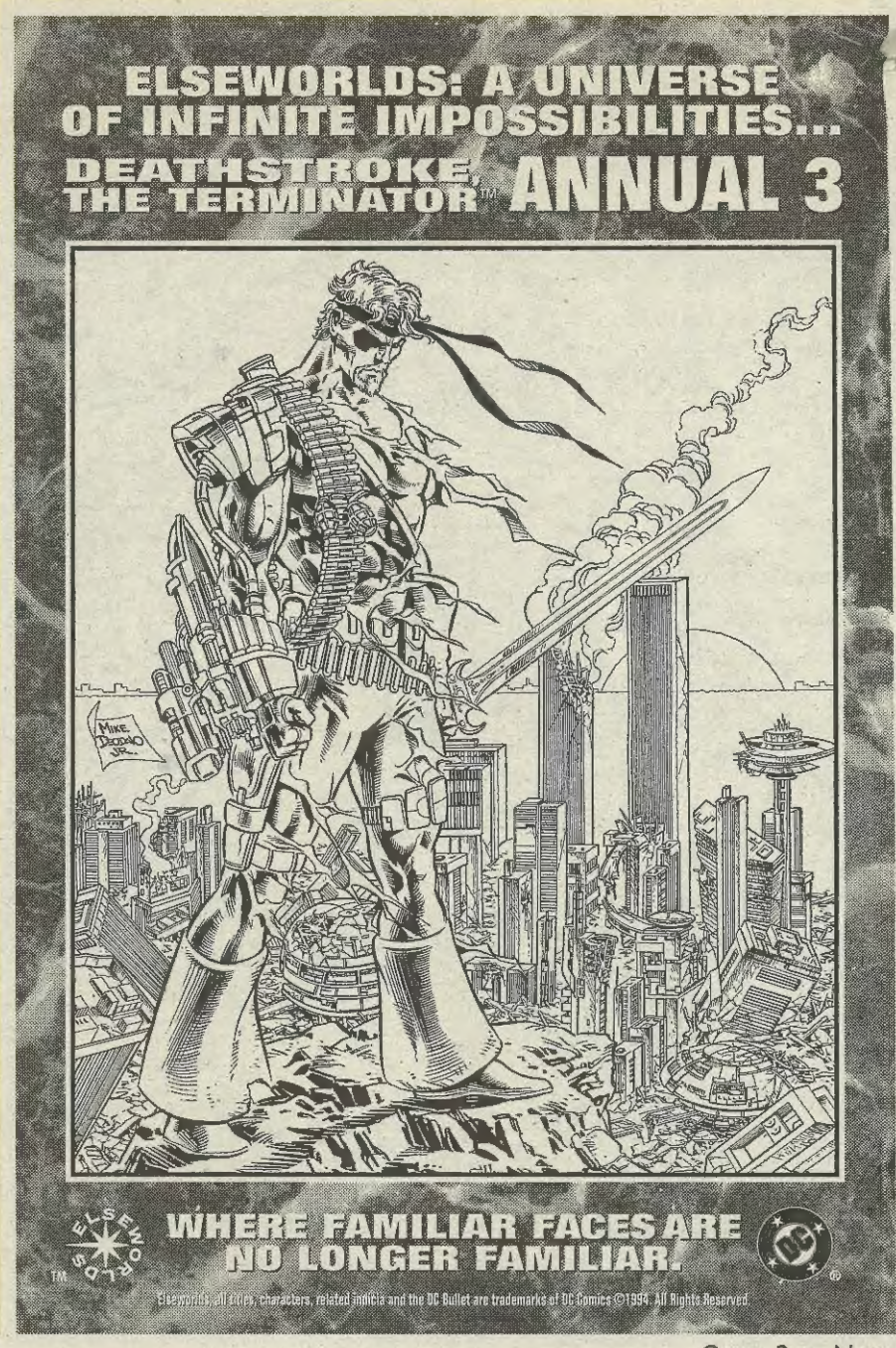
This reminds me, in one regard, of the ***Concrete*** story I reviewed at the start of this column: that is, it also seems to compress time in large chunks, taking a great many pages to present events that only take a matter of moments. That's something that Japanese manga have done well for years, but it's also something that many American creators are reluctant to attempt. Steranko, Eisner, Kubert, Messner-Loebs... they proved that it could be done well in American comics. I'm glad to see this approach used more frequently.

*This **Grendel** story takes a more personal look at the idea of being a Grendel. What it takes to become a member of the order. What happens to any personal life that you might have had. And whether or not there is any way out once your in. Seagle has created a tale that is part **The Thing** and part **The French Lieutenant's Woman**. The mystery of the disease, the threat of the environment, and the promise and rememberance of love all tie together to make this one of the most memorable **Grendel Tales** to be published yet.*

The art by Paul Grist is perfect for the story. Grist's minimalistic fine line style, and harsh use of black and white create a compelling look at the harsh aspects of this story.

***Grendel** is a superb series of stories, and **The Devil In Our Midst** ranks right up there with the best of them.*

Grendel Tales: The Devil In Our Midst #1
Cliff: ★★★
Brett: ★★★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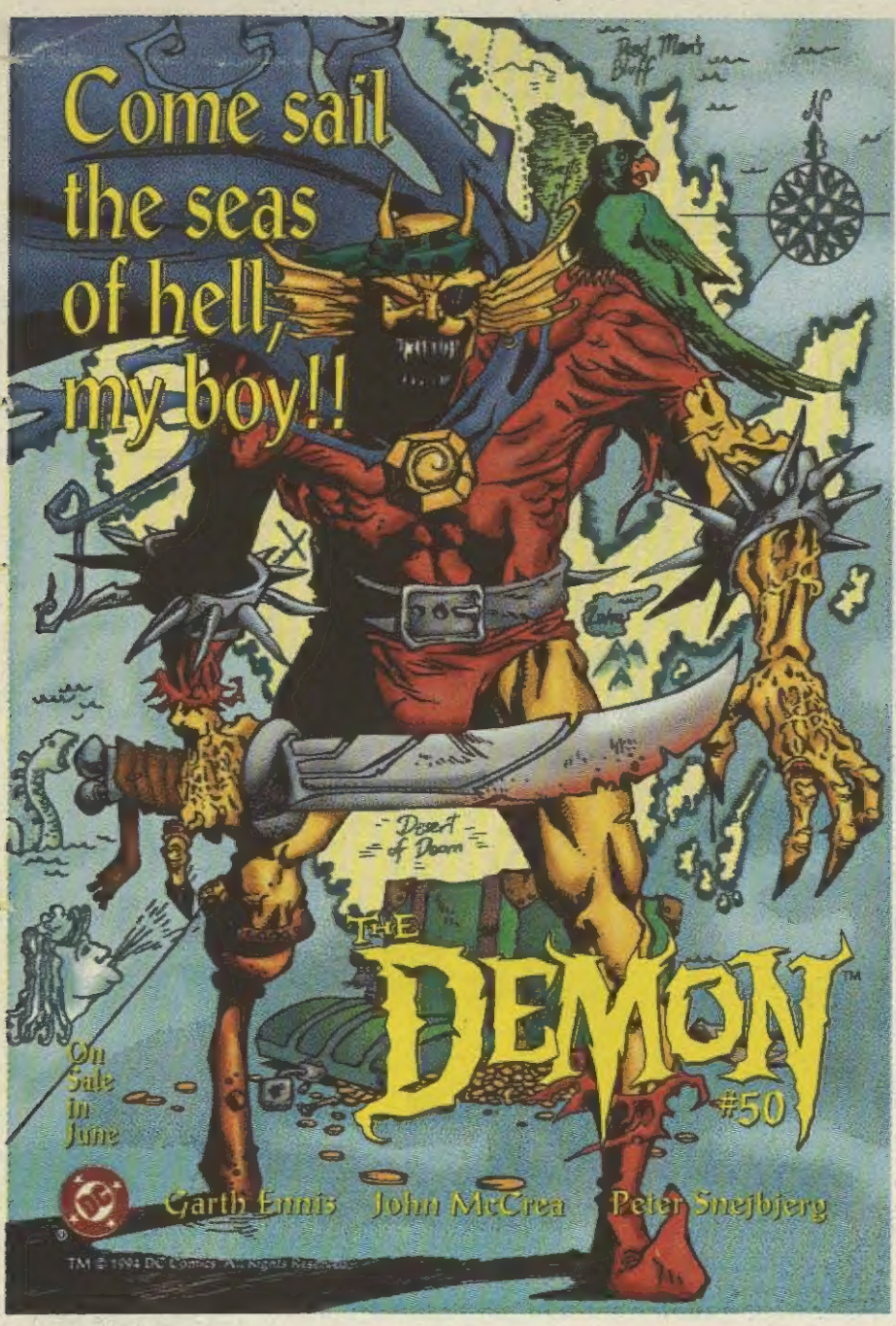
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